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ABSTRACT

The writing activities in this book are designed to help children build writing skills through the communication of their own ideas, discoveries, and feelings. Developed and field tested as part of a basic skill development project, the book presents a rationale for primary children's writing, outlines the fundamentals of teaching writing, and offers detailed suggestions regarding classroom management. The specific, and often illustrated, lesson plans outline sequences of activities and suggest immediate and subsequent follow-up exercises. They cover a wide variety of writing activities including personal scrapbooks, playing with words, class books, greeting cards, nonsense rhymes and stories, comic strips, television guides, science journals, tall tales, and yarns. (MAI)

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# Children's Writing

## An approach for the primary grades

Leonard Sealey
Nancy Sealey
Marcia Millmore

Written for the Learning Research and Development Center
University of Pittsburgh

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# Foreword

"Why doesn't IRA publish some descriptions of practical classroom activities for language learning?"

"How about giving us some language experience ideas that I could use with my own pupils—starting next Monday?"

Questions such as these are often directed to officers of the International Reading Association or to the publications staff of the Association. Primary grade teachers who are searching for procedures to use in developing their pupils' writing abilities will discover quite a few suggestions in this booklet. In fact, Chapter 5 of this publication consists entirely of descriptions of activities which can be used almost immediately in primary classrooms or adapted for use with a minimum of effort. However, the chapter is not just a collection of one-time activities; instead, each procedure is accompanied by some additional suggestions for follow up, both immediate and long term.

Since this manual was developed—and field tested—by the highly respected Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh, it is hardly surprising that Chapter 1 presents a rationale for primary children's writing. The second and third chapters set forth the fundamentals of the teaching of writing, and the fourth chapter deals with certain details of classroom management. Thus this manual is useful, not only as a handbook for individual primary level teachers, but as a pedagogic aid in organized teacher education.

Because the preceding versions of this manual were tried out in a variety of elementary schools in recent years, the International Reading Association has the good fortune to publish a handbook which has already been refined by a series of field tests. Obviously, the users of the booklet also benefit from these refinements. The officers of the Association are grateful to the Learning Research and Development Center and to the Ford Foundation for the development of the manuscript for this very practical addition to the IRA list of publications.

William Eller, *President*
International Reading Association
1977-1978

# Preface

This book is one product of a special project at the Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh. The Center's general mission is to find ways of adapting education to individual children, so that they can build on their own talents and interests beginning in their earliest years in school. The special concern of this project, funded by the Ford Foundation, was to explore some of the methods of informal education within a context of concern for basic skill development in the traditional areas of the elementary school—reading and mathematics.

Writing seems to us to be one of the most important ways to assure that all children master the basic literacy skills and allow them freedom to express their own concerns and build upon their special interests. In fact, over several years of work with children, we have become convinced that full development of literacy skills can occur only when children do a lot of writing as well as a lot of reading. Further, we have learned that children write a lot only when they are encouraged and expected to write about things they *want* to write about. Thus, we do not see a choice between informal education and rigorous learning. Rather, we find that activities that encourage children to communicate their own ideas, discoveries, and feelings, particularly in written form, are a way of promoting rigorous learning. These activities give children a way to apply what they already know to what interests them and, in the process, they acquire new abilities. This is the essence of what we mean by adapting individuals—finding their capabilities at the start and building from there.

Up to now, the "lore" of how to manage writing activities has been passed on by word of mouth—from teacher to teacher, by supervisor traveling from classroom to classroom, in informal workshops. These methods are excellent if one has access to them; however, since not all teachers do, we are trying in this book to present in written form some of the lore of many classrooms and teachers.

### *About the Authors*

This manual has been made possible by the work of three individuals—Leonard Sealey, Nancy Sealey, and Marcia Millmore. Leonard Sealey has been active in British informal education for many years. As an adviser in Leicestershire schools, he helped initially to develop and spread many of the techniques and approaches described in the manual. Later, he came to the United States where he headed a program concerned with utilizing some of the British informal methods with American children, particularly poor and minority children. Thus, he knows American children and schools as well as the British. Nancy Sealey was a teacher in the Boston area for many years and later became a consultant to teachers beginning to use informal methods of teaching all around the country. The Sealeys are now engaged in various undertakings aimed at conveying the accumulated experience in the schools to teachers in both Britain and America.

Marcia Millmore worked with the Learning Research and Development Center for several years on various projects concerned with training teachers to use new instructional methods. She is the person who tested the initial version of this book, working with a few teachers in one school. Subsequently, she supervised its trial in approximately thirty elementary school classrooms of quite different types. She made frequent visits to classrooms and held extensive discussions with teachers involved. The present form of this book takes into account observed patterns of classroom use and teachers' reactions.

### *The Structure of the Book and How to Use It*

Chapter 1 gives some general background on writing by young children, including the general rationale for writing in

the elementary grades and a description of the different kinds of writing that can be expected at these ages. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the approach to generating writing by young children that is developed in detail in the rest of the book. Chapter 3 describes one structured sequence of activities which might be used to generate writing on a day-to-day basis. Chapter 4 goes into the detailed practical aspects of setting up a writing program and keeping it going. Finally, Chapter 5 describes twenty-four specific activities for stimulating writing. For each of these there is a description of an initial sequence of activities for getting started, followed by suggestions for follow-up activities.

It is important to read Chapters 1 and 2 in order to understand the context in which the activities of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 can be expected to work most successfully. You may want to read the introductory sections through quickly the first time and then return to them later to help in interpreting your own experiences with writing in your classroom. If you decide to use this approach, you will need to read Chapters 4 and 5 carefully and decide on the specific activities you think will make the best beginning in your own classroom. You probably should select only two or three of the activities in Chapter 5 to begin with, and give each two or three weeks to "mature" in your classroom before adding new activities. Too many new activities introduced at once can lead to confusion rather than enthusiasm and sustained interest in writing.

This book has been used by many teachers over the past several years in substantially the present form. In classrooms varying from traditional to informal, and including all the mixed forms in between, teachers and students report that they have successfully and pleasurably pursued creative writing. We are indebted to all these teachers for reactions and suggestions which have contributed to the final revision of the book, and to all the young writers who have shared their creations with us.

We would also like to thank Cathlene Hardaway, Billie Hull, and Violet Wilson for typing the manuscript in its initial and many revised forms.

Lauren B. Resnick
Learning Research and Development Center
University of Pittsburgh

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The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinion on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without assuming the endorsement of the Association.

*Chapter 1*

# The Rationale for Writing in the Primary Grades

Elementary school educators have always been concerned that children become literate, but most of the contemporary pressures brought to bear on schools are related to the urgency of helping children to read rather than to write. Our intention here is to redress this imbalance by offering some practical suggestions about ways in which young children can begin to write freely and to some purpose.

Such a development is by no means new; some schools in the United States have made promising beginnings. While the work is not confined to any one approach, it is significant that the most interesting developments have been associated with classrooms in which student self-reliance is valued. We should not be surprised at this. When children are expected to reach out to find their own levels of competence and are able to pursue their personal interests to a stage at which they become anxious to share their findings and experiences with others, there will be much writing of great variety.

One of the most interesting aspects of such expressive writing is the fact that it can begin very early for many children. There seems to be no need to wait until children can read before they begin to write. We shall have more to say later about the relationship between reading and writing, but it seems to be obvious that children will wish to encode their own thoughts in writing when they are encouraged to begin to decode the written thoughts of others.

## WHY SHOULD CHILDREN WANT TO WRITE?

Many children are interested in beginning writing just

because it is new. Like adults, children desire fresh experiences. Sensitively handled by teachers, the earliest stages of writing will be welcomed. But making a start is not enough; it is essential that children go on to become writers in the sense that they turn naturally to that mode of expression when it seems appropriate. The inculcation of this attitude is a much harder task.

As with most forms of expression, writing will not flourish unless it gives the child some form of satisfaction. Initially, the fact that the writing exists, that it is finished, may be enough to make the writer feel the effort to produce it has been worthwhile. But such satisfactions are short-lived unless the work evokes some response on the part of others. Few want to go on writing unless the end product attracts attention. The child's writing is a response to a previous stimulus; but when the writing is complete, it must, in turn, become a stimulus which leads to many kinds of responses by others.

The satisfactions children experience when their writing is complete provide secondary motivation to write. Primary motivation is a function of desire or need. Such desires and needs cannot be switched on and off by teachers. They will arise naturally as a result of the child's feelings about his experiences, but only in environments where writing is seen as a legitimate form of the expression of such feelings.

The implication is that the classroom must be a place in which writing is a "natural" activity. Such a classroom will contain appropriate locations and materials for writing to take place, and these will be in use by some children most of the time. There also will be clear signs that the writing is of consequence. Children's writing will be displayed and used. Many classrooms abound with displays of children's written work, but often the work is exhibited to show the "best" or to show the range in relation to one theme. Such work is often very badly presented and soon becomes ragged. Children's writing that is displayed must be presented in the best possible manner and should have some real purpose that will be readily understood. For example, there might be books of stories to be read or charts which have their genesis in topic studies and give interesting information.

Children will continue to write only if they find that it becomes easier to match their thoughts and feelings more

exactly to the words they write. This is a process which never ends and we, as adults, are faced with the same problem. But a feeling of mastery can begin to grow if children are helped to develop writing skills. These skills are varied. It is not just a question of spelling words in the conventional manner—an aspect which has claimed the undue attention of teachers and children in the past. More important, in the early stages, is the ability to select from the torrent of words which surrounds each thought and to organize the words into a form which has meaning to others. Communicating about a particular idea in a variety of contexts is at the very heart of writing, but the child's vocabulary will need continual enrichment.

These developments cannot happen unless the children engage in a whole range of experiences which are embedded in extensive amounts of talk among peers and with informed adults. Writing is perhaps the most sophisticated form of language, and it depends almost entirely on two other forms, talking and listening, at this early stage of development. Later, the fourth form, reading, also will have a contribution to make. It is not surprising, therefore, that children seem to write readily and with greater degrees of skill in classrooms where many activities are taking place which are largely self-generated and are accompanied by a great deal of purposeful discussion about the work in hand.

## WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS KINDS OF WRITING?

Writing is a complex symbolic representation of a person's thoughts and images. Often, it is indicative of the search for meaning and reveals the degree of knowing. Thus, writing is closely related to the internal manipulation of external experiences.

Most writing by young children can be considered as encoded speech. Residual images of their experiences are stored in children's minds and are first transformed into inner speech. The transliteration of this symbolic form into that of writing will be a struggle in the early stages of development, and the result of the effort will often be a pale shadow of what a child really thinks and feels.

Given this general view of writing, we must consider ways of categorizing the various forms. It must be stressed, however, that such categorization is for our own purposes. It will be of no significance to the young child.

The writing research unit of the University of London Institute of Education considered the "postures" any writer might take. The three major categories suggested may be outlined as follows:

1. *The transactional posture.* This is language concerned with getting things done. It involves giving information, instructions, explanations, and opinions; recording facts; and attempting to persuade and advise others.
2. *The expressive posture.* This is language which is close to the self, used to reveal the nature of the person, to verbalize his consciousness, and to exhibit his close relation to the reader. Expressive language is a free flow of ideas and feelings.
3. *The poetic posture.* Poetic language is a verbal construct, fashioned in a particular way to make a pattern. Language is used as an art medium.

It must be pointed out that the three postures were derived from an examination of adult writing, but they would seem to have direct application to writing of any kind.

Any set of contrived writing experiences designed for children should be concerned with all three postures. When children write freely, it will be seen that they adopt all of the postures and move freely from one to the other, although individuals may seem to feel more comfortable with one mode from time to time.

Teachers should see that none of the postures is valued more highly than the others. It has been fashionable for some educationalists to be more concerned with the poetic posture in an effort to engender creative writing. While this is seductive, and can be achieved by providing the right stimuli, it is equally important that the child becomes fluent in the transactional mode.

Much of the early writing of young children will fall into the transactional category. A piece of writing about something that a child has done is very common. For example, a five-year-old might be helped to write a single sentence about a picture he

has painted which he thinks might be of interest to others. We might have a picture of children filing into a building with the caption, "Our class went to the museum last Friday." The record of the growth and behavior of the class hamster, written by individuals and combined into one large book on display next to the hamster's cage, is an example of transactional writing in that it gives information and records facts.

The expressive posture is often revealed unexpectedly by young children when they are writing in a transactional mode. An account of something may suddenly break down into a very personal piece of writing which verbalizes some new awareness. The interjection of such writing is not intended to reveal the writer's closeness to the reader, but it is a valid example of uncontrived personal expression. At one time, many young children were required to keep daily diaries in the hope that the expressive posture would be revealed and would develop well. As one would expect, such writing cannot take place without accompanying ideas and powerful feelings, and many daily diaries degenerate into much that is trivial and quite impersonal.

Expressive writing, if intentional, is an indicator of the child's degree of personal development. If it occurs often, we can suppose that the self-concept is maturing. Such writing must be treated with some care by the teacher. The preservation of the symbolic self, as Hayakawa* has pointed out, is the fundamental motive of human behavior, and the teacher's insensitive criticism of expressive writing can evoke a strong response in the child and seriously inhibit further writing of this kind.

Because the poetic mode involves the deliberate, formal structuring of language with a view to producing an elegant pattern, it is unlikely to form any major part of the writing of young children. Teachers, however, should be on the lookout for the beginnings of such writing, which are likely to appear when a child feels something deeply. The poetic posture will normally spring out of expressive writing, and its truly individual and creative qualities should be recognized.

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*Hayakawa, S.I. *Symbol, Status, and Personality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953.

It has been pointed out by others that children will learn to write by writing, just as they learned to talk by talking. The approach to children's writing must be one of action. The teacher's aim will be to get children writing about things that matter to them without concern for the posture which such writing represents.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF WRITING TO SOME OTHER MODES OF EXPRESSION

It is fundamental to human growth and development that we become competent in various forms of expression. Man is a social animal and, as such, he must be able to get and keep in touch with others.

Language is basic to such communication. It is not only central to expressive communication among persons, but it is crucial to communication with the self. Indeed, the development of a symbolic system for thinking depends upon language. Hayakawa suggests that at least nine-tenths of all thinking is really talking to oneself.

It will be obvious that writing is very closely related to speech, and if teachers diagnose and remedy difficulties with the written form of expression, they naturally look to an improvement in children's abilities to express themselves by speaking. But speech has its roots in gestures and bodily movements. A baby communicates first in this way, accompanied by a repertoire of sounds which, eventually, become speech patterns. At times, it may be helpful to encourage bodily movement as a prelude to speaking and writing. In contemporary terms, this might involve children in dramatic activity or movement to music. Much good writing has taken place after young children have been encouraged to dance and mime.

Writing is a graphic form; it involves making marks on paper. As such, motor skills are involved, but one also needs to develop a sense of order and pattern. For these reasons, the relationships between writing and drawing or painting are close. Some approaches to the correct formation of letter shapes have been through art, but picture and pattern making also seem to release energy in some children for speaking and writing. In many classrooms where there is art of a varied and high standard, the writing is of corresponding quality.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING AND READING

We have stated earlier that encoding and decoding, as inverse operations, are clearly related and that their separation is illogical. It is traditional that reading—the decoding—should be in advance of writing—the encoding—but a few innovative approaches to reading now are beginning to reverse this order. Children's own thoughts about topics of their choice are encoded by the teacher into sentences and written into specially made books. The children then illustrate their books which become their first readers. It will be noted that the mechanics of encoding are handled by the teacher, but the children are party to the process and develop strong senses of ownership.

Children develop knowledge of letter/sound relationships (phonics) as they copy words provided by the teacher and as they try to write their own words. Also, the children learn left-to-right, top-to-bottom progression as teacher and children read back what has been written. We stress that reading and writing must proceed side-by-side. If this is not catered to in any reading program, children's writing may be severely inhibited in terms of content, form, and skills.

If a child writes something, or has it written on his behalf, the presumption should be made that somebody will read it. Any classroom should have many notices and pieces of children's writing which are there for real purposes. For example, we would expect to find a half-completed model left on a work table with a child's notice, such as:

This is mine. Please do not touch. *Sam.*

Such simple notices provide excellent motivation for both reading and writing because they affect behavior. This aspect has been grossly underplayed in classrooms for young children. Too much that is written has been purely descriptive, although such writing still has an important place.

When children are writing, they should alternate between encoding and decoding as they struggle first to form words and sentences and then read them to check the match between their thoughts and the writing. All children will not work in this way, but it is a habit that should be encouraged by the teacher. Clearly, some constructive skills necessary for writing can become analytic skills required for reading, or the

opposite can apply. If these transformations do not seem to function, and discrepancies arise, this provides the teacher with opportunities to intervene and provide teaching which will be seen as a response to a felt need.

As children write, they need many different words. At first, these are provided directly by an adult, but the provision of word sources later will include thematic word charts of many kinds, such as the following:

days of the week and months of the year
colors
numbers
food
things at home
things at school
things we like

Other charts should provide basic vocabularies for personal feelings, common actions, and prepositions. There also may be charts related to the specific interests of groups of children or those which arise from activities of various kinds. For example, a visit to the zoo could lead to a discussion of the "zoo words" which children might like to have available should they wish to write about their experiences or write imaginary stories based upon them. In the early stages, the charts will be illustrated and be rather like the pages of a huge picture dictionary, although the entries may not always be in alphabetical order. These word charts will be useful in connection with reading. If appropriate reading books are placed adjacent to each chart, some children may be motivated to read them, and another link with reading will be forged.

Teachers should regularly ask children to read selected examples of their own writing. If children cannot read what they have written, some surprise should be evidenced. Again, this situation can be used by the teacher to motivate the development of reading skills. Specific examples of the close relationship between writing and reading may be found throughout the following discussions.

## SOME STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

We have implied that children should begin to express

themselves through writing from their earliest days in school. In a later chapter, many suggestions are given for generating many kinds of writing. It is accepted, at the beginning, that children will be unable to write for themselves and that an adult, or older student, must write at their dictation. Later, all kinds of writing will be attempted by children on their own.

In a complex learning environment the amount of children's writing should reach considerable proportions. Much of it will be "free" in the sense that it is generated by the children of their own volition and relates to subjects that matter to them. Other writing will be structured. It will emanate from experiences stimulated by the teacher for particular purposes. For example, the teacher may introduce work to give practice in the expressive or poetic modes.

The assessment of the quality of a child's work must be subjective, but it may be helpful to consider some significant stages in the development of the child's writing ability.

The first stage is that in which the child does no more than "label" things and representations of things. We may have isolated words or, at best, a caption. For example, after drawing a picture, the child may write on it some of the names of the things which the picture shows. Or he may wish to give the picture a title. Again, the child might want words and captions to be written to accompany things that he has constructed.

The second stage may follow quickly on the first. It is the stage when the child wants to write a complete statement. Such statements consist of a noun clause and a verb clause. A complete statement is an effective unit of communication. If the child is using a restricted speech code, the sentence may seem unconventional, but it should still be acceptable to the teacher, provided that it is complete and relevant.

At the third stage of development, the child makes two complete statements which he wants to write, or have written for him. These statements must be related in some way, although their order may have little or no significance.

At the fourth stage, the child extends his writing to three or more sentences, but this stage has not been reached unless the statements have a logical order. At this stage, too, the child will be writing on his own, although he will expect to have access to many sources of words, including the teacher.

The fifth and final stage of the development in the early grades is that in which the child persists with his writing over an extended period of time in relation to a theme. Such themes will be of great variety, and the amount of time spent on each will vary a great deal.

Many teachers consider that a child's progress through the five stages is a function not only of the amount and variety of his opportunities to write freely, but also of the degree to which some of the writing is structured. We agree that such controlled experience is necessary, although it must never be the only kind of writing that the child engages in.

## SOME EXPECTED OUTCOMES

While it would be foolish to presume that any objective related to writing can be achieved fully during the child's first years in the elementary school, we would expect to find evidence of some progress toward each of the outcomes outlined below:

1. The growth of the ability to be articulate in writing about events and ideas about which a child wishes to communicate.
2. The growth of the ability to reflect upon past experience, in writing, with the objective of seeing what things mean.
3. The growth of the ability to use writing as a means of expressing emotions.

It will be noted that the three objectives relate to behaviors which depend upon the child's competence across the range of writing postures.

*Chapter 2*

## Generating Writing by Young Children

Given some appreciation of the need for children to write, and of the kinds of writing which may be expected, teachers will need to consider the practical issues involved in initiating and maintaining writing.

### APPROACHES TO WRITING

The indirect and direct approaches to writing are discussed here. We will consider each separately, but they are not mutually exclusive. It is likely that both will be used once writing is established in any classroom.

*The indirect approach.* Although writing will be one outcome, the approach does not seek only to generate writing but to enrich all modes of individual and creative expression. It is expected that children can be helped to communicate about their experiences, ideas, and feelings in a great variety of ways. Writing will be one mode. If such an approach is used, a classroom for young children will have something of the quality of a workshop where many things are happening at any one time and the children are communicating about them in many media. The symbolic representation will have great variety and be at different levels of sophistication. For example, some children will communicate through the manipulation or creation of three-dimensional objects, while others may produce two-dimensional patterns and pictures. Writing—a sophisticated and complex symbol system—will gradually be encouraged, but its forced use may seriously inhibit the quality and freshness of a young child's efforts to communicate. Of fundamental importance, however, is the fact that the

approach will generate a great amount of speaking and listening. As children work, they are free to talk with one another and with the adults present; this is the essential prerequisite to any form of writing. Indeed, a child's first writing will be encoded speech that he considers to be sufficiently important to "preserve." This approach may be difficult to establish for a variety of reasons and may require patience on the teacher's part because the writing outcomes are not immediate. Most important, the approach demands very careful preparation. Although the resultant activity in the classroom is nontraditional and apparently "informal," the underlying structures must have form which can be precisely described, yet be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of children as these become explicit. With such an approach, the teacher must be a clinician.

*The direct approach.* This approach depends upon the provision of appropriate tasks of increasing complexity which can be introduced to children without the need basically to change the whole teaching-learning environment. If such tasks are to cater to the differing abilities and interests of any group of children, they can only be designed as starting points which indicate specific directions and then permit a wide range of outcomes within the domain. The activities in Chapter 5 are suggested for this purpose. This set of activities is not comprehensive but is intended to stimulate children in the early grades to write with pleasure and increasing competence. The activities vary in difficulty, and the sequences are designed to be flexible enough for teachers to adapt them across a wide age and ability range. The focus of the majority of the activities is on the transactional and expressive postures and may relate to both. The poetic mode is introduced but is not given the same amount of attention at this early stage of a child's development.

In addition to providing examples of activities which may be introduced by the teacher on appropriate occasions, we also outline in Chapter 3 a structured sequence which may be used to generate writing on a day-to-day basis.

## HOW SHOULD AN APPROACH BE CHOSEN?

The teacher's judgment about which approach to use

when introducing writing will be influenced by her concern to match characteristics of the new work with that of the ongoing activity. The approach to writing need not be the same as the approach used in other work, but the children must come to see it as compatible if they are not to regard writing as something extraordinary. For example, if most of the activities in a classroom begin with the children's own ideas, then a closely prescribed approach, with the teacher orchestrating, would appear contradictory. On the other hand, children who are accustomed to highly structured presentations in regard to their own learning cannot always be expected to find their own reasons to write. The motivation must be external.

### WHEN CAN A CHILD BEGIN WRITING?

The decision relating to when a child should begin writing must rest with the teacher. Our experience suggests that many children are ready to begin writing soon after they enter school. Readiness is evidenced by children's interests in words, by attempts to write their names, by forceful statements about things they have been doing, and attention to writing or printed matter. In classrooms which combine children of several grade levels, young children are stimulated to write because they see older children doing so. They also model the behavior of adults, and it is important that teachers write notices, make charts, and write for a variety of other purposes in full view of the children.

Teachers will know that often these indicators of readiness occur well in advance of a child's actual ability to render much in his own handwriting. It has been suggested that dictation can bridge the gap between the child's desire to write and his ability to actually do so.

We have already implied that the act of taking dictation can be a rich experience for both teacher and child. Most important, when a teacher spends time in this way, it suggests that writing is a very important activity and it gives it validity in the child's eyes, just as time taken to hear a child read does with regard to the decoding process. The motivation to write will not be high unless the child considers it to be something that people do and find useful and rewarding.

Clearly, taking dictation from a child also provides the

teacher with countless opportunities to adopt a diagnostic role. Often, doubts can be clarified by direct questions such as, "Can you tell me the sound of the first letter of this word?" Teachers can appraise the accumulation of both encoding and decoding skills, and so become aware of gaps in the children's learning which can then be dealt with by direct teaching in small-group situations. We have also stressed that the act of taking dictation provides many opportunities for teaching sounds, letter formation, and other skills. The need for a child to learn these skills becomes immediately evident under these circumstances.

If a teacher appreciates all these reasons for taking dictation from children, it will be understood that its main purpose is not to get children to write earlier but rather to respond to needs that are very real. In addition, the act of taking dictation establishes an important model of how those who know things should provide help for those who do not. We expect a child who knows how to wire a simple electrical circuit for a model to help another child to do the same. We expect a child who can read to give assistance to one who has difficulty in reading. At some future stage we will also expect a child who can write to assist another who needs help to encode his own ideas.

Clearly, the use of dictation can be enormously important in helping children to "write." But often a teacher may not be in a position to organize her classroom in such a way as to make maximal use of dictation. In this case, she may have to limit her availability for dictation. Some teachers set aside times in which they are available exclusively for this purpose. Others schedule regular individual dictation appointments, reminding children well in advance of their sessions. Some first grade teachers wait until midyear to introduce writing. They explain that by midyear many children can write relatively unaided, reducing the number of children requiring large amounts of teacher time for dictation. Teachers using this method usually spend the first part of the year developing vocabulary that is of later use to children in their writing.

Others also can contribute to the amount of dictation that goes on. Older children in the school can be invited in for certain periods to take dictation, a help to both the younger and the older child. Parents also enjoy this function in classrooms

where their help is encouraged and appreciated. Moreover, dictation between a parent and child at home can answer the demands from many parents for homework, provided the rationale for their activity is clearly explained to the parent.

Children seem ready to engage in writing or writing-related activities very early. Consequently, the answer to the question, "When can a child begin writing?" is largely dependent upon the opportunities teachers are able to make available.

## FINDING A TIME FOR WRITING

Finding a time for writing is not just a question of how to find time for children to write when the curriculum is already filled, but involves a serious assessment of how much time the teacher herself can devote to becoming involved. In the beginning stages, it is better for any teacher to be conservative in this judgment. If the assessment is not realistic, frustrations will certainly arise.

If a teacher decides that she wants writing to be going on throughout the school day, then she must be prepared, when dealing with young children, for them to make continuous demands on her or on some other resource person. If the teacher cannot handle such demands personally, then she must arrange for others to shoulder some of the load. Clearly, teacher aides can help in this respect, but visiting parents and older children also can give very real support. Experience has shown that all concerned have much to gain from these kinds of cooperation.

When a finite amount of time is to be devoted daily, or at regular intervals, to writing, then the teacher must plan to use this smaller amount of time to maximum advantage. It is essential that the teacher arrange to keep this time free of all other demands. She must also marshall all the resources available that will give the necessary assistance to children without her personal involvement. For example, children who cannot write at all and who might normally dictate their thoughts for the teacher to write on their behalf, could use a simple tape recorder for making a record. The spoken words can be reproduced in written form later, if they are of special importance to the child. Children with a very limited writing vocabulary, who can read some words, could be asked to

arrange word cards. Those who have difficulties with letter formation can be encouraged to use a large-print typewriter. Children who are further along in their writing development require a variety of resources which will enrich their vocabulary, such as the thematic word charts described previously.

## ESTABLISHING A PLACE FOR WRITING

The physical environment in which writing takes place is an important consideration. It might be presumed that all children prefer to write in a designated, quiet space seated at a table. In fact, young children appear to be quite individual in these respects. At times, a child's best work can be produced while he is sprawled on the floor surrounded by the bustling activities of others. There are some assumptions, however, that can be made about the physical environment. It should be possible for every child to know where the writing materials he needs can be found, where supportive resources are normally available, and where other children who want to write are likely to be found. For these reasons, locations for writing should be designated and the area, or areas, well equipped. Chapter 4 suggests one way of resolving this issue. Apart from the organization of the physical environment, it is necessary for teachers to define the child's degrees of freedom relating to the use of writing spaces. Children need to know how often writing is to take place, how they are expected to use the materials available, and what outcomes are to be expected.

## SHOULD MISTAKES BE CORRECTED?

The activities suggested in this manual will generate a great deal of writing. As stated previously, in the early stages, adults may need to provide continuous help to young children as they struggle to make their responses. Such close support means that the writing produced will be of an acceptable standard of accuracy. Later, as the children feel able to write unaided, mistakes of many kinds are certain to occur. In the past, many teachers corrected these errors in traditional ways. It is now suggested that the persistent mistakes which a child makes should be viewed diagnostically by the teacher, that is,

examined with the objective of finding out why they were made. Subsequently, it will be the teacher's job to provide particular experiences, or other resources, so that similar errors are not repeated. Often, errors indicate that the classroom is deficient in some respect. For example, if children cannot spell words relating to their homes, this might suggest that a word source in the form of a picture dictionary or word chart relating to this theme is not available. On the other hand, a particular child who makes similar spelling mistakes might need help with word-building skills which are based on phonics. In every case, the teacher should remember that writing provides the young child with his only opportunity to express sound in a graphic symbolic form. A child who struggles to do this on his own is having a richer educational experience than one who hesitates to the extent that he never writes a "new" word without the teacher's help.

As children approach independence in their writing, some teachers introduce the concept of proofreading in the English curriculum area. When the child understands its purpose and use, the teacher can suggest that he proofread his creative writing when it is finished. Through self-correction many children produce better technical work, and avoid the threat to their expression that rigid correction by the teacher is likely to produce. Whatever response the teacher makes to a child's errors, it must not seriously inhibit the child's willingness to go on expressing himself by writing.

## EVALUATION AND RECORDKEEPING

Some form of evaluation and recordkeeping is necessary so that teachers, children, and their parents may be aware of growth. Initially, the record will comprise samples of the work of each individual, collected at regular intervals. Later, the ordered samples will be supplemented by the teacher's notes which refer to special difficulties and their alleviation, significant growth points, and the special interests of each child. Existing means of communicating with parents can be extended to relate to writing, but it is also important for teachers to arrange for parents to see significantly large amounts of writing which the children produce. For example, if a child produces an extended piece of writing that reveals an

interest which parents could support out of school, then it might be photocopied and sent home with an explanatory note. Such an approach to parents will do much to encourage their continued support. The use of visiting parents to help children as they write has been mentioned previously, but parents can also help with assembling picture files and other supportive materials. Formal methods of assessment appear to have little place in the early stages of the child's writing development.

## SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR WRITING

Before any work is introduced, it is presumed that the teacher will share her proposals and tentative plans with colleagues because the new work may have complications for the school as a whole and will certainly be enriched by the understanding and support of the whole faculty. As work progresses, cooperation can be crucial. To take just one example of a practical outcome, writing produced by some children may have great appeal as reading material to others who are not in the same class. When it is possible to use written work in this way, it is seen to have a highly significant purpose and will stimulate further effort in the school as a whole.

*Chapter 3*

# A Structured Approach to Writing for Young Children: How to Get Started

## STAGE ONE—Labeling and captioning

1. Provide the child with unlined paper, no smaller than 10 inches by 8 inches, bound into booklets of up to twenty pages.
2. At some time during each day, the child will be expected either to draw or paste in a picture about something which interests him, using the left-hand side of a double spread in the booklet.
3. When the child has completed his picture, you, or an adult, should sit with him and talk about it. Ask questions which are so framed that a variety of appropriate speech patterns are used and the child's vocabulary is enriched in the personal, meaningful context of his own work.
4. As the child's thoughts and feelings about the picture are becoming explicit to him, ask the child if he would like to write the names of any of the things in the picture, or if he could suggest a caption for the picture as a whole.
5. If the child wants names to be written, do this in the spaces which the child indicates. When a caption is suggested, write this for the child on the right-hand side of the double spread. During this time, keep the child actively involved. For example, when writing a word, you might ask the child to "write" one of its letters with his finger on the table top, or to tell what

another letter "says." Write the letter shapes correctly and of sufficient size so that each may be differentiated clearly. A black felt tip pen is excellent for this purpose.

6. When the caption is written, ask the child to read it aloud and then trace over the letters with a colored pencil or attempt to rewrite the caption in the space below your writing.

This stage is short, and most children soon progress to stage two.

### STAGE TWO—Writing complete statements of one-unit length

1. The child provides a picture, as in stage one, but the subsequent discussion takes a different form in that the child is encouraged to talk about the picture in descriptive terms and is helped to formulate his thoughts into complete statements which hang together in some recognizable pattern. Remember that the criterion for accepting any statement is its completeness as a unit of communication about the picture. For example, a young Afro-American might use Black English, the ethnic quality of which would be perfectly acceptable provided that the statement is complete and relevant. If not, help the child to make it so.
2. After the child has clarified those aspects of the picture which seem important to him, suggest that he make one complete statement about the picture, which you will write on his behalf. As before, this statement is written on the right-hand side of the double spread, while you employ various techniques which help the child understand how the statement is encoded.
3. Once completed, the statement must be read aloud by the child; and he should then be asked to find individual words, not necessarily in the order in which they were written. The statement is then copied by the child in the space below your writing. If

he wishes, the child can do this several times until he copies with confidence and accuracy.

4. Finally, write each of the words in the child's sentence onto separate one-inch strips of card cut to the appropriate length. These are retained by the child and stored in a cardboard pocket stapled to the back of the writing booklet. When the child has all the words, he should match them to the sentence. Subsequently, the strips will be used for sentence making and as a word source in relation to the child's first attempts to write unaided.
5. Before long, many children will want to try to write on their own. This should be encouraged, but the child must be reminded that he must try to write a complete statement about his picture and that he should think about this first so that he writes the sentence he considers to be the most important one to express his idea.
6. When a child has written his own sentence, check to see that it is complete, and ask the child to read it aloud. As before, individual words also should be read in random order. Also check the correct formation of letter shapes, and see that suitable spaces have been left between words. Every classroom should have means of helping children form letter shapes correctly and these should be introduced to children as a result of the diagnosis of their individual difficulties.

By the time that a child has filled his first one or two books, he may be anxious to write more than one complete statement about a picture. If so, he is then ready to demonstrate that he has reached stage three of his writing development.

A note about word passage:

The general tendency is for the child to use words already written in his booklet and available to him on word cards. It is, therefore, necessary to check to see that the child can still read these words. Reading practice which takes place regularly, is the most

effective. Take ten cards at random from a child's word store and use them as "flash cards." If the child cannot read any of the word cards, he should be helped to do so and asked to think of ways in which he could help himself to read them. Some children may invent games of "Concentration" (see Chapter 5) by first matching each word which they find difficult to read with a drawing or picture on a card of another color. Individuals can combine cards and play such games in pairs, or in small groups.

If the child uses only those words which he has used before, much of the child's unaided writing will be repetitive and trivial. Interest will wane. This is the time when additional word sources must be available. Thematic word charts are of great value, but the child should still feel free to approach the adults in the classroom for help. Words discovered or provided should be written on word cards and placed in the booklet pocket when they have been used.

STAGE THREE—Writing two complete statements

1. The stage of writing two sentences about a picture constitutes a significant step forward. Writing two statements raises the question of how they may be differentiated one from the other. Many children will presume that this is done by writing them on separate lines. But it is an easy matter to introduce the child to the period mark and the use of the capital letter for the first word which begins each sentence. Children learn the correct use of these punctuation forms with little effort at this time. Very little formal teaching seems to be necessary.

2. As at stage one, provide children with word cards to match what they have written, the words being stored in a pocket stapled to the back of the writing booklet. Encourage children to use new words in their sentences in an attempt to help them make their writing more precise and vivid. As before, this is more likely to happen if there are abundant and

varied word sources readily available to the children in the classroom. New thematic word charts sould be built up with the children.

## STAGE FOUR—Writing three or more complete statements

1. From two sentences, it is a short step for some children to write three or more.

   When three complete statements are written, they may, at first, appear to have no logical sequence and even seem unrelated. For example, a picture showing a scene at home might be accompanied by the following sentences:

   I can cook dinner.
   I love my mom.
   I like to watch TV.

   Some children will require considerable help before they are able to develop a description or story in a logical way. This is the time when they need many opportunities to listen to stories read to them. It is presumed that you should not interrupt their reading of any story in order to discuss its structure. The careful selection of stories to read to children is a most important task.

2. By stage four, the children in any class will begin to exhibit varied levels of competence. Some will seem to go ahead fast, having an intuitive understanding of how sentences can be arranged to communicate in a logical way. These children will begin to write more and more when they have a deep interest and will soon progress to stage five. Others may have problems in ordering their sentences and may hesitate to write more than three or four. A few will want to go back to the stage of dictating to the teacher. Such a regression is to be expected. If a child wishes you to write on his behalf, take the opportunity to discuss how one sentence should lead to another.

   At this stage, too, some children will begin to feel restricted if they must continue to draw before beginning to write. There is no reason to continue the

activity or to maintain the double page spread format, if a child has ideas of his own.

3. As children write more, the practice of seeing that every word is matched by a word card stored at the back of the booklet becomes unmanageable. Once children write more than three sentences about any topic, one of two alternatives should be introduced.

   First, the small word cards are replaced by a box of file cards. At the point of changeover, the child himself can copy words that he wishes or needs to have in his "new" store from the old cards. From then on, the file cards are used only for words which the child requires and cannot write correctly for himself. The file cards, at first, may be in crude alphabetical order, but this will be refined later.

   The other alternative involves the use of a small word book in which each child writes, or has written for him, the words that he requires. The word book will have narrow pages and each double spread should relate to one letter of the alphabet. As with the file cards, children can transfer to their book any word from the word cards which they particularly want to note before using the book for new words. Unlike the file cards, the word book cannot be strictly alphabetical in that words which begin with the same letter will be entered on a page in random order. Despite this minor disadvantage, word books have proved to be very effective and also inexpensive.

## STAGE FIVE—Writing thematically

1. Children who write a number of sentences in a logical order about the same subject are writing thematically. They persist with their writing for long periods and often seem deeply involved. When the classroom schedule requires that a child stop writing, he should understand that it is quite appropriate for him to continue his theme on the next occasion. By this means, even young children will begin to produce considerable pieces of work.

2. At this stage, it is inhibiting to persist in the use of writing books as used earlier. It is time for the children to make individual booklets of many kinds, varying them in shape, size, and form to match the themes with which they are concerned. For example, if a child chooses to write about houses, the booklet that he makes, with the teacher's help, may be cut to the rough shape of a house, and decorated accordingly. Such booklets will have different arrangements of their pages, as suggested in "Some ways to make books" in Chapter 4.
3. When the child writes in a booklet of his own making, the balance between illustration and writing may change considerably. Some children will wish to insert smaller drawings, or cut-out pictures, into the text. Others may have no illustrations at all, while some might produce a booklet of many pictures supported by much less writing. All forms are acceptable. The criterion is the development of a theme.
4. When children make complete books, discuss with them the question of standards of presentation. Every effort should be made to help children produce their work in the most effective form.
5. As children begin to write freely, their ideas will run ahead of their skills. Anxious to encode such ideas in writing, they may misspell words and use incorrect punctuation. You may be concerned about this, but it should be realized that the problem will not be alleviated by harsh criticism. If you insist on accuracy, the writing may become stilted and brief. The best way to deal with the problem is by quiet personal discussion followed by remedial activities designed to offset specific difficulties. This requires skillful handling. Children must see your intervention as appropriate to their needs. If not, subsequent work with skills sequences may be viewed as a "punishment" for writing so much.
6. Children at the first four developmental stages will have contributed to class books of many kinds, but

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this is the time to extend the activity and enrich it. The title given to any class book often determines the extent of the children's contributions. At stage five, topics such as "Ghost stories" or "How to reach my home from school" are more suitable because extended pieces of writing are implied.

When children contribute to class books, they work individually but the results are shared. True group work in writing will be rare. Most children will be unable to accept and work toward group goals at this early stage of their development. On the other hand, two children may work together to produce a chart. For example, two friends might produce a chart about their neighborhood—writing, drawing and collecting pictures and artifacts which relate to places which particularly interest them. Charts are more easily made by children working together because everything that they assemble is visible at the same time. It is like producing one enlarged page of a book.

Finally, the richness and variety of the children's writing will give some indication of the importance accorded to it by the teacher. As with many other things, teacher attitude will be a critical factor.

A note on helping independent writers select themes:

Sometimes the writing of young children will seem to be similar in style to that of the books in their reading program. It will bear little relationship to the normal ways in which they express their ideas or convey their excitement about a topic which really interests them. If the books in the reading program are the ones which children are encouraged to read, it is not surprising that they come to think that the books they write should be similar. No child, irrespective of his level of reading ability, should be confined to the reading program books. Indeed, one of the more important teacher functions is to see that the best possible range of other books of quality is available to children at all times. This becomes crucial when dealing with children who have few opportunities to become involved with appropriate books outside school.

Children who are capable of producing extended pieces

of writing on themes of their own choosing are often willing to write about topics suggested to them, provided that the subject has an experiential base. Others, confused by the extent of their freedom to choose, may seek your advice in regard to themes.

In both cases, direct experience can be a critical factor in relation to the extent and quality of the writing subsequently produced. To take a simple example, a teacher might help a child interested in the natural environment to grow some seeds in the classroom. When the seeds germinate, the teacher might suggest that the child make a booklet about growing seeds. Writing of this kind will not always be extensive, but it may stimulate further interest in the subject, or raise questions which can only be answered by additional experimentation. An awareness of the interplay between direct experiences and writing will be of great importance to the child at subsequent stages of his educational development.

## COMMENTARY

The approach outlined in this chapter is designed to give the child maximum degree of choice, but its structure predicates a careful progression through clearly defined stages. Progression is necessary to the development of competence, and observation of the stages by the teacher can serve as a check on such development.

While it is suggested that all children might work in the manner outlined, it must be stressed again that such activity will not constitute the whole of children's writing at any level. For example, if a child at levels one or two wants to dictate a long story to his teacher, time should be found for this, even though the story may turn out to be almost incoherent.

To become a writer requires experiences and inputs of many kinds. The teacher may provide experiences such as trips about which children can talk and then write. The resulting ideas for stories or poems could be recorded on the chalkboard, leading to individually written pieces by the children. This approach is but one element, just as the activities suggested in "Generating Writing by Young Children," Chapter 2, are another.

*Chapter 4*

# Some Practical Aspects

## SETTING UP AND MAINTAINING A WRITING AREA

If it is expected that children will take their writing seriously and go ahead independently, it is necessary to establish an area in the classroom where suitable basic materials are provided and writing surfaces are kept free for this purpose. This implies the provision of adequate display and storage facilities, the concentration of word sources of many kinds, and the allocation of at least one table and set of chairs to accommodate up to six children to be used only for writing.

Setting up such an area is not an easy task. It requires considerable attention to detail if the space really is to be functional. The area must be so arranged that the things which a child needs both to support and stimulate his writing are available in such a manner that his energy can be concentrated on the work. It is rather like setting up a very small kitchen in which one intends to do serious cooking.

The first major consideration concerns whether or not the area should be separated from the main teaching space. Obviously, no area in a classroom would be set up so that children working within it would be out of visual contact with others in the room.

An area which is completely cut off may suggest to the children that writing is quite separate from everything else, or that it is the prerogative of a selected few. Experience shows that a space partially open at the front but closed off on the other sides functions very well. If it is set in one corner of the room, the walls make good display surfaces and the room

divider can also be the storage unit. An effective divider can be made from corrugated cardboard or fibre board, four feet high, tacked to the back of a low cupboard which has open shelves divided by vertical partitions.

The second consideration concerns the materials which the children use. Some teachers may feel that young children cannot be relied upon to use materials economically when they have free access to them. Others will know that children soon adopt sensible attitudes if they are given real responsibility.

If the writing area initially is a well-organized, attractive space, and the children are told that they are expected to help make it even more so, they do not seem to abuse their freedoms. Such attitudes develop most readily when the children feel that the space will be available permanently. They must know, for example, that they do not need to appropriate a magic marker because they fear that none will be available within a few days. Such knowledge is largely a function of the ways in which materials are organized. If every item has a clearly defined space indicated (for example, by outlines drawn on the shelves of the storage unit), one-to-one correspondence between an item and its assigned space is easily made after a work period.

### *Basic Materials*

Pencils: medium and soft, varied colors.

Ball point pens.

Magic markers: thick and thin, varied colors.

Crayons.

Chalk: white and colors.

Erasers.

A variety of writing and drawing papers stored in trays or shallow boxes. Each tray or box should have a sample of the paper it contains pasted on the end.

A file of mounted pictures, sorted thematically.

A limited number, but wide variety, of magazines and

catalogs to be used as picture sources by the children. To prevent them from becoming an untidy heap, children should be told to remove whole pages if they require photographs which appear there. Magazines should be replaced regularly.

Simple bookbinding materials (see section on "Some ways to make books" which follows in this chapter).

Word sources:

a. Commercial and homemade dictionaries.
b. Thematic word charts (may be clipped to coat hangers and hung at suitable heights).
c. Blank word cards.
d. Word cards related to themes.

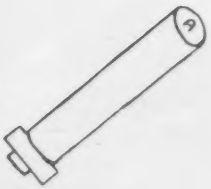
*Other Materials*

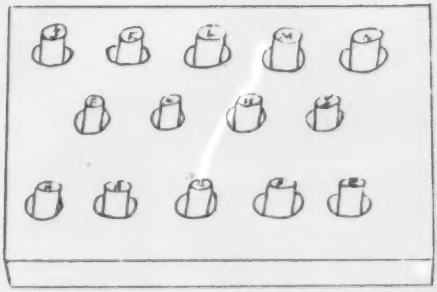
A simple tape recorder and a supply of cheap tape cassettes.

A typewriter.

Several stamp pads and 2 sets of rubber letters.

The rubber letters come in sheets. They are to be found in variety stores at about $1 per set. The letters should be mounted separately on four-inch lengths of one-half inch dowel, using Elmer's glue. Each rod should have the corresponding letter stamped on the end. The rods can





then be stored in a shallow box with a lid. Holes should be punched through the lid so that the dowel rods can stand upright, as shown in the illustration.

### *Post Office Box*

You may wish to construct a special post office box for the writing area. Provide mailing envelopes of assorted sizes among the writing materials to mail news items, birthday greetings, special stories, etc., that children may wish to send to friends in the room (including the teacher). A child's name and desk or table number could constitute his "address," or children could invent unique address systems. At a regular time each day, a child postman could make the deliveries.

## SOME WAYS TO MAKE BOOKS

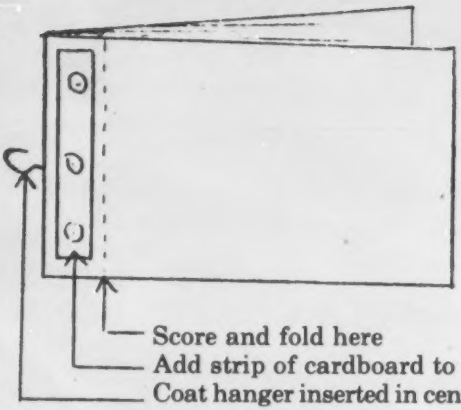
### *Basic Materials*

| Papers and containers | Fasteners | Tools |
|---|---|---|
| heavy cardboard (boxes) | metal rings | scissors |
| oaktag | yarn, thread | glue |
| newspaper | ribbon, twine | 1" and 2" tape |
| construction paper | staples | paper punch |
| newsprint | brass fasteners | paper cutter |
| manila paper | nuts, bolts, washers | needles |
| wallpaper sample books | shoe laces | stapler |
| flat boxes | elastic bands | |
| paper towel tubes | | |

### *Decorative Materials*

crayons, paints, magic markers
contact paper scraps, used gift paper
cloth oddments—burlap, felt cottons

*Large Class Books*

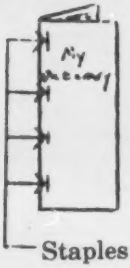


Cut heavy cardboard covers to suit large sheets of assorted papers (manila, construction, oaktag). Punch holes and fasten with nuts, washers and bolts. These can easily be removed to add pages.

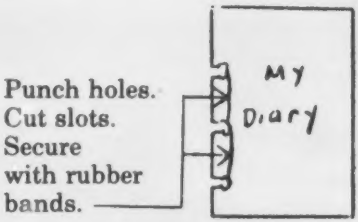
Score and fold here
Add strip of cardboard to reinforce back and front
Coat hanger inserted in center of book for easy hanging

Protect the book covers with clear contact paper or by brushing with a solution of Elmer's glue and water (consistency of cream).

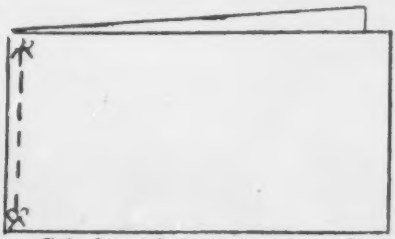
*Small Books for Individual Use*



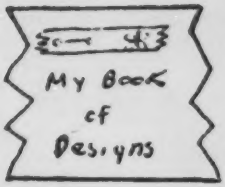
Staples

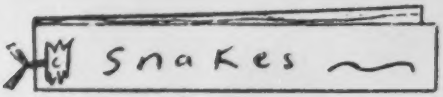



Punch holes.
Cut slots.
Secure
with rubber
bands.

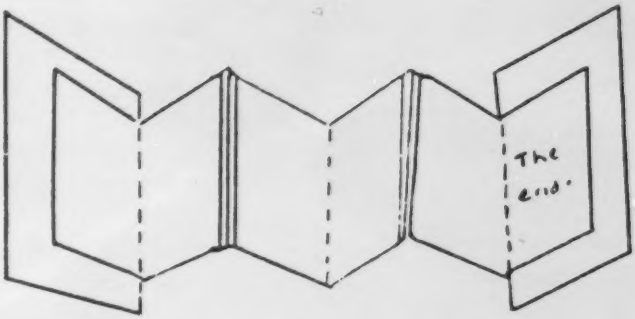


Stitch with yarn or thread.



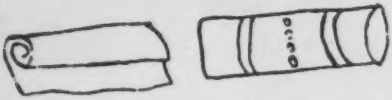

Apply Scotch tape to front and back covers.
Punch holes through tape and fasten with rings, brass fasteners, twists from plastic bags or shoe laces.



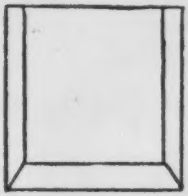

Simple "accordian" book.

Fold sheets of heavy paper and
tape several sheets together.
Paste first and last folded pages
to heavy card covers.

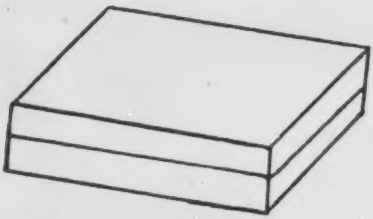
*Small Books for Individual Use (unconventional)*



Tape several sheets of paper together. Roll up the sheets of paper and insert them into a decorated paper towel tube.



Tape two pieces of cardboard together on three sides only to make an "envelope." Slip pages inside.



Use flat boxes decorated by individual children to protect the pages of their stories (One box for each story).

Roll up pages of writing inside scrap pieces of felt, oaktag, or leather and tie into a "scroll" with ribbon.

MAKING USE OF WORD CARDS

As they engage in many of the activities suggested in this manual, children will request a great variety of words from the teacher. Such needs may be met in a number of ways. A

teacher may simply tell a child the word that he requests, the word may be written in a child's personal "dictionary," or it may be provided as a word card.

Often, without any discussion, a word will be carefully written out for the child onto a card. There will be times, however, when a teacher will want to use the occasion as an opportunity for indirect teaching. For example, as the word is written out, the teacher might first draw attention to the names of the letters by saying them quietly as she forms the letter shapes. Alternatively, a child might be invited to contribute to the building-up of his word through the use of questions such as, "now... what letter does your word begin with?" By these means, writing a word card will become a joint activity.

Whenever a child requests a word in the early stages of his writing development, and the word has been written out for him, the teacher should also give him a second, blank card. At a certain time each day, children should copy each word given to them onto a corresponding blank card and then read each word. This is suggested for two reasons. First, the act of copying serves as a reinforcement to both writing and reading the word. Second, the child builds up a collection of duplicate words, making possible many more writing activities. Ideally, word cards should be stored in a file box, but a strong manila envelope is a practical alternative. At first, the order will be random. Experience in arranging words in alphabetical order can come later.

### *Some Activities with Word Cards*

A. Sorting Activities

The word cards are a basic resource for sorting activities of many kinds. Sorting can take place at a variety of levels of sophistication, but all children can participate.

Examples of criteria for sorting are:

Words that begin with a specified letter
Words that begin with a specified sound
Words that rhyme
Words that have a specified number of letters

Words with a specified number of syllables
Words that go together thematically
Action words
Naming words
"Words about me"
"Words I have forgotten how to read"

B. Words with pictures

Give the child a set of any five pictures mounted on cards. Choose one picture, and ask the child to find all of the words in his box that could go with it and to place them around it.

e.g. *Picture of a car*
Child chooses: ride car fast wheels
race seat police

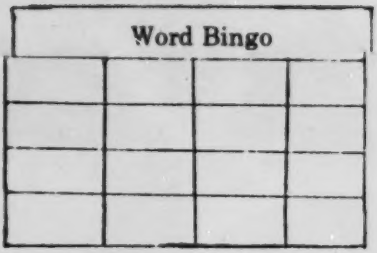
Ask the child to repeat the activity for each of the other pictures. When he has finished, ask him to read the words and to talk about how they are related to each picture.
As an extension of this activity, the child can be asked to give one or more sentences which include the words he has selected.

C. "Concentration"

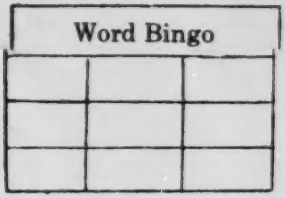
The duplicate sets of words allow a child to play "Concentration," but the game is enhanced if the sets of cards of individuals are combined. In either case, a child who turns over matching cards must say the word before the cards can be taken. When sets are combined, both players' word recognition and reading abilities are enriched.

D. Word Bingo

1. Prepare and duplicate a large number of copies of Bingo master sheets in the forms shown below:




Long Form (16 words)



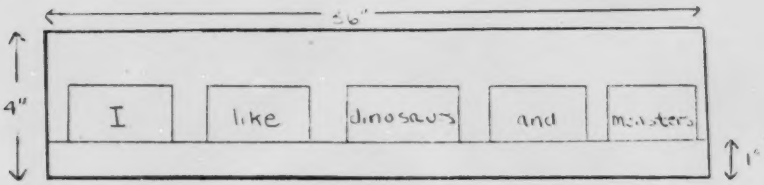

Short form (9 words)

2. Ask the child who wishes to make a game to take from his box all the words that he can read—up to 25 words. Check to see that he can read them.
3. Give the child three copies of either the short or the long form of the Bingo sheet. Check to see that he knows how to play Bingo.
4. Ask the child to shuffle all his word cards and then copy the first word into the top space of the column on the left, second word into the second space in that column, and so on, until the first Bingo sheet is filled.
5. Ask the child to shuffle the word cards a second time and to fill in the spaces on the second Bingo sheet in the same manner as before.
6. Ask the child to shuffle and repeat the process for the third Bingo sheet.
7. The child who made the game plays it with three other players in the normal way. The child who makes the game should be the "caller" in the initial stages, saying *and showing* each word to the other players. Later, as children begin to recognize the new vocabulary, the words need not be shown as they are spoken.

E. Making sentences

1. Check that the child's word box contains a sufficient number and variety of words for him to make sentences. Some children may need to be given additional prepositions, pronouns, etc., but such new

words should not be provided without the child's agreement, and *his own suggestions should be elicited* whenever possible. Then talk with the child about making a sentence—what kinds of words come first, the need for the sentence to make sense, etc. Build one or two sentences with the child, placing the cards in order for him. If the child has difficulties with arranging the cards on the table, provide a "pocket" as shown below:




Check to see that the child can read each sentence after it has been constructed.

Ask the child to make more sentences with the cards in his box. Encourage him to make as many different sentences as possible. When the child states that he has finished, let him read each sentence to you.

2. Select two children to work together. Ask them to take from their boxes the words that they can read. Ensure that the words remain in separate piles.

   Ask the children to spread out their cards, still keeping them separate, so that they can see each word.

   Check to see that the combined sets of cards are of sufficient number and variety for sentence building. If not, either ask the children to look in their boxes for cards of the kinds required, or provide such cards yourself after discussion with the children.

   Tell the children that they are going to play a sentence-making game by working together. Explain that they will take turns in selecting a word to start a sentence from their own set of cards, and that the

other child must then add the next word, the first child the next word, and so on, until a child puts down a word which he thinks completes a sentence. The game then halts while the children discuss whether or not they then have a complete sentence. If so, the child who placed the last word, reads the sentence aloud and writes his name on a blank card which is placed by that sentence. The game then continues until no more sentences can be made with the cards available. The teacher then checks the sentences and asks each child to read aloud the sentences which have his name by them.

3. Ask the child to select ten of his favorite words from his box. Check to see that he can read these words and then add ten more words from his box so that sentences can be constructed.

   Ask the child to make one sentence using only the 20 words and to read it aloud. Then invite the child to make as many different sentences as he can with the words as follows:

   Construct a sentence with the word cards.
   Copy the sentence into a blank book.
   Break up the line of word cards.
   Make another sentence.
   Copy it into the book after leaving adequate space to illustrate the first sentence.
   Continue as before.

   When the child states that he has finished, ask him to read the sentences in his book and then invite him to add illustrations.

   If the child has written very few sentences, show him how to make a new sentence from an old one by substituting for a small number of words, or by changing the positions of words. For example:

   My father likes to drive fast.
   My mother likes to drive fast.
   My mother likes to drive our car.
   My mother likes to ride in our car.
   My brother hates to ride in our car.

50

*or*

Father loves my mother.
Mother loves my father.
My mother loves father.
My father loves mother.

4. Talk with two children about questions and answers. Use one child's word cards to build a question such as, "What do you like to do?" Ask the other child to construct an answer to the question with his own word cards. For example:

   "I like to play baseball."

   The children then continue the game, one child makes a question and reads it aloud, then the other constructs an answer and reads it aloud also. If the answer is accepted as a response to the question, the second child has a turn to pose a question. If not, the first child has a second turn.

   The game may be extended to include four or five children. One child begins the game by constructing a question which each of the others attempts to answer. The first child to do so, asks the next question.

   At a later stage, cards containing marks and periods may be provided for the children's use.

*Chapter 5*

## Writing Activities

The activities suggested here are for the teacher's use. Each activity is presented in two parts. The first describes the sequence which the teacher may follow when introducing the work to the group. The second gives suggestions for follow-up activities. Activities are classified as "immediate" or "subsequent." Immediate follow-up activities should take place once the children have responded to the original stimulus, normally within a day or two of the teacher's introduction. Subsequent follow-up activities may extend over a much longer period.

Both kinds of follow-up activities are central to the child's learning. They are not mere enrichment. Often, they will justify the work which the children have completed and stimulate them to go further. For example, the "Homemade Read Alongs" activity will lead to the production of the children's own books and corresponding tapes. If these are not read and listened to by other children, as the immediate follow-up suggests, the children may see little point in having them.

All the activities generate work which is individual. No child in a group will produce writing which is identical to that of another, but many opportunities are provided for individual work to be combined into a larger whole. Many children find working within a group very supportive, and such an approach generates a variety of ideas which are usually shared and elaborated.

It must be stressed again that each activity is merely a starting point. Although the sequence which an activity suggests

may be followed closely in the first instance, teachers will find that some modifications and extensions may produce a better correspondence between the work and the characteristics of a particular group or class. Teachers should not hesitate to make such modifications once they receive feedback from the children.

The activities which follow are associated with the transactional, expressive, and poetic postures at levels appropriate to young children. The activities and the writing postures with which they are associated are shown below:

| | Transactional | Expressive | Poetic |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ordering Pictures | * | * | - |
| 2. Personal Scrapbooks | * | * | - |
| 3. Pictures and Words | * | * | - |
| 4. Words and Actions | - | * | - |
| 5. Pocket Books | * | * | - |
| 6. Books without Words | * | * | - |
| 7. Class Books | * | * | - |
| 8. Playing with Words | - | * | * |
| 9. Homemade Read Alongs | * | * | - |
| 10. Greeting Cards | * | * | * |
| 11. "If I were teeny..." | - | * | * |
| 12. Nonsense Rhymes and Stories | - | * | * |
| 13. Comic Strips | * | * | - |
| 14. Small Books | * | * | - |
| 15. Picture Postcards | - | * | - |
| 16. TV Guides | * | - | - |
| 17. Advertisements | * | - | - |
| 18. "When I grow up..." | - | * | - |
| 19. Science Journal | * | - | - |
| 20. Mood Music | - | * | * |
| 21. In the Bag | - | * | * |
| 22. Parts | * | * | - |
| 23. Tall Tales | * | * | - |
| 24. Yarn Stories | * | * | - |

## ORDERING PICTURES

### Activity Sequence

1. Cut out and mount on uniform size pieces of tag board,

sets of 4 pictures which, when ordered, show a simple story. (Such sequences may be found in magazines, in comic strips, or in advertisements.)

2. Give a child a set of pictures and ask him to put them in the right order to tell the story.

3. Talk with the child about the story which the pictures tell. Ask the child to tell you one sentence about each picture.

4. Ask the child if the pictures could be arranged in any other order to show a different story. If the child can do this, ask him to tell you the story, as before.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Ask the child if he would like you to write out one sentence about each picture onto card strips. If so, take the dictation and write in such a manner that the onlooking child is shown correct formation of letters, the importance of spaces between word units and the use of the capital letter and period when writing a sentence. When the cards have been written, arrange them and the pictures in random order. The child must then match each card with its picture and then arrange the pairs in the correct sequence to tell the story.

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## PERSONAL SCRAPBOOKS

**Activity Sequence**

1. Talk with the children about the nature of a scrapbook. Explain that a personal scrapbook would contain graphic things of particular interest to an individual such as:

photographs
magazine pictures

drawings
cards of all kinds
letters
cuttings from newspapers
pieces of their own writing

2. Give each child two pieces of cardboard cut from heavy cartons and a variety of kinds of paper cut to a corresponding size. Both card and papers should have punched holes.

3. Provide the children with decorative materials and tools, such as contact paper, wallpaper, tissue, foil, crayons, magic markers, glue, and scissors. (These materials and tools can be pooled for the working group.)

4. Allow each child to decorate the cover for his scrapbook and help him to write an appropriate title of his own choice for it.

5. Provide brass fasteners (1½" long) and help each child assemble his scrapbook.

6. Help each child to make a first entry in the scrapbook. This should refer to when he started the book and something about how he made it. The entry may be dictated by the child and written by the teacher, or written personally by the child with the teacher's help with words.

**Follow Up**

The activity is long term. Children will add to their scrapbooks over a period of perhaps a semester. Initially, many of the entries of the younger children will be pictorial with perhaps captions added, with the teacher's help. If entries are written by the teacher, space can be left for the child to copy, or even trace over, the written words. As children begin to write independently as a result of other experiences, this development should be reflected in their scrapbooks. The sequence of labeling, writing single phrases or sentences, then writing several

related sentences should be encouraged; but the choice of entries should remain the child's. All entries should be dated and entered in chronological order. If a child wishes, at a later date, to add to an existing entry, additional pages can be inserted for this purpose.

The teacher can extend a child's interest and validate it, at appropriate times, by providing supplementary material which a child may wish to enter into the scrapbook alongside his own entry. For example, a child who has written a poem, might be given another that has the same theme.

It is important also that teacher and child should sit together from time to time to read through the scrapbook. In this way, a child's own development can become clearer to him, and it can become a diagnostic tool for the teacher. For example, both child and teacher can become aware of progress in the following modes:

a. A movement from pictorial representation to the use of words with pictures and then to words alone.
b. The increasing range of kinds of entries, both in regard to form and content.
c. Patterns of interest, their persistence and shift.

Such scrapbooks can be one of the records of children's development which can be shared with parents on a regular basis.

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## PICTURES AND WORDS

### Activity Sequence

1. Obtain a picture of a person or event that will be of high interest to the children, for example:

   The Jackson Five in concert
   A crane lifting an object at a building site

2. Display the picture on the bulletin board together with one related word printed on a file card (3" x 5").

3. Ask the children what the word has to do with the picture and initiate discussion about the picture, eliciting other words.

4. Highlight significant words which come up during the discussion by the use of statements such as:

   "Yes, that's a good word. Would you say it again please?"
   "Is there another word which means the same?"

   Stress descriptive words which evoke vivid images.

5. Show the children a prepared file pocket containing a number of blank file cards. Pin the poocket at the foot of the bulletin board. Tell the children that they may take any number of file cards on which they may write words (one per card) related to the picture. Offer help in writing words if such help is needed. Say that the file cards will be pinned near the picture.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

When interest wanes, remove the picture and file cards. Paste the picture on the outside of a heavy manila envelope and place the cards inside. Punch a hole in the top of the envelope and hang it in a place in the room so that the picture is visible.

The children will then use the envelope as a thematic word source.

B. Subsequent

Use the words for sorting games, for example:

Words that begin with the same sound.

Words that tell how you feel.
Words that tell what something looks like.
Words you like/words you don't like.
Words you can read/words you can't read.

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## WORDS AND ACTIONS

### Activity Sequence

1. Write individual words, such as *angry, scared, silly,* and *cool,* on separate cards. Make a set of at least 20.

2. Select one of the cards, such as that with *scared* written on it, and place it face upwards on a table around which the children are grouped. Ask the children to read the word aloud.

3. Talk to the children about the word, the images which it evokes, and the bodily responses which they might naturally make when stimulated by the word. Consider the range and extent of bodily movements and facial expressions by questions such as:

   "What would your hands look like?"
   "What would your eyes look like?"
   "How would you move? Slowly? Quickly? Quietly?"

4. Ask one child in the group to select a card which appeals to him, to keep it unseen by the rest of the children, and to try to convey what the word is by mime and gesture. Other children in the group are challenged to guess the word.

5. Continue activity four until each child in the group has had a turn.

6. Provide blank cards and longer strips of card, and invite the children to write other words, phrases, and sentences

which could be used for the same "game" by other children. Provide assistance with the writing, as necessary.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Have the children exchange cards which they have written and continue the mime activity in smaller groups.

B. Subsequent

Collect the cards which the children have written and store them in a labelled manila envelope, or box.

Use the cards for a modified game of Charades.

Use the cards to suggest paintings or drawings.

Have each child pick a card and assume a still pose that conveys the word on the card. Photograph each child in his pose. Mount the photographs beside the envelope of cards so that the children can match the cards to the photos.

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## POCKET BOOKS

**Activity Sequence**

1. Make a number of small picture books of 4 or 5 pages, as shown below, and provide a packet of oaktag strips for each.

Pictures mounted on oaktag sheets fastened with metal rings.

Fold bottom edge up approximately 1½" and staple to form a pocket to hold word cards.

2. Give each child in a small group one book and a packet of the strips.

3. Ask the children to think about the story which the pictures tell.

4. Talk with each child individually about the pictures and the story. Invite the child to write (or dictate to you and then copy) on the cards a *word*, *phrase* or *sentence* suggested by each picture page. Ask the child to then place the cards in the corresponding pockets.

5. Sit with each child who has completed activity four and read what he has written aloud to him. Check that he can read it. Remove the cards and arrange them in random order. Ask the child to read each card and replace it in the correct pocket.

## Follow Up

A. Immediate

If the child has written a phrase or sentence to correspond with each picture page, sit with him and discuss how the phrases and sentences consist of arrangements of word units. Then, with the child watching, cut up one card into the word units and ask him to replace them in the correct order (make sure that the word units are in random order before the child orders them). Ask the child to repeat the process for himself with the remaining cards. When this has been done correctly, point out that the word units can be used to make other phrases or sentences and leave the child with the task of trying to make one or more of them to match a picture, or pictures, in the book, placing the word units in the corresponding pockets as before.

Staple a manila envelope to the back page of each book for the permanent storage of the cards on which a child has written. These cards may then be used to introduce the activity to others.

B. Subsequent

Create a display space for the books and associated cards and invite other children to match the words and pictures.

---

## BOOKS WITHOUT WORDS

### Activity Sequence

1. Make a collection of commercial and homemade books without words such as the following:

   *Vickie*
   *The Naughty Bird*
   A homemade book about racing cars
   A homemade book of cartoons

2. Allow the children to "read" and discuss the books.

3. Make it clear to the children that the books tell a story or give information. Point out that the story or the information might also be told in words.

4. Invite each child to think of words, phrases, or sentences about the pictures in his book. Say that you would like to know about them and will visit with him.

5. Sit with the child. Write the words, phrases, or sentences which the child gives on paper or cards. Affix the writing temporarily in the picture book by means of paper clips or rubber bands.

6. Expect that each child can read what you have written for him.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Let children exchange the books to which words have been added and try to read them.

## CLASS BOOKS

### Activity Sequence

1. Make a large book.
2. Select a high-interest topic and gather related materials such as pictures, a piece of poetry, magazine and newspaper cuttings, etc.
3. Discuss the topic with the children, showing them the materials and the large book.
4. Begin to assemble the materials into the large book in an orderly fashion, taking suggestions from the children while so doing.
5. Tell the children that the large book is for the class to complete. Inform them that they are invited to write, draw, or collect contributions for it.
6. Write the title of the book on the cover and place it in a prominent position saying that you hope children will make their contributions during the next few days.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Help the children who wish to do so to produce contributions to the large book during their writing time.

B. Subsequent

Abstract words from the completed book and rewrite them on cards as a thematic word source.

Develop a system for exchanging class books among other classrooms at the same level within and/or outside of your school.

## PLAYING WITH WORDS

### Activity Sequence

1. Write an incomplete, evocative phrase on the board, such as:

   Happy is...
   Angry is...

2. Talk to the children about the phrase and ask them how they might complete it. Try to elicit vivid, personal images.

3. Help each child to write one or more completed phrases.

4. Provide each child with paper and crayons and ask him to illustrate the phrase that he has written which he likes best. Help each child, as necessary.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Make a montage of the children's drawings and writing in the form of a chart, with the appropriate heading.

Repeat with other incomplete phrases.

B. Subsequent

Make a large book of blank pages, with a new title of the same kind, and invite children to respond by writing phrases and sentences in the book.

When the children have made a large number of responses, help them reorganize their papers into a book of "Opposites" (e.g., happy/sad, healthy/sick, etc.).

## HOMEMADE READ ALONGS

### Activity Sequence

1. Give the child a small blank book and invite him to draw or paste a picture on the left-hand page of each double spread, leaving the facing page blank.

2. When the child has filled the book, talk with him about a "story" of one or two sentences to match each picture.

3. Make sure that the child knows how to use a simple tape recorder in the recording mode.

4. With the drawings in front of him, let the child tell the story of each picture onto tape, pausing between each story.

5. Arrange for the tape to be written out in large print by an older student, a visiting parent, your aide, or yourself.

6. Ask the child to copy the written-out stories onto the corresponding blank pages of his book of drawings or pictures.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Place the child's completed book and tape on display for other children to read and listen to.

B. Subsequent

When a number of books have been completed, reproduce the text of each on ditto sheets and ask the children concerned to make their corresponding drawings on ditto sheets also. Bind up the reproduced text and drawings into separate books and include blank pages where cut-out pictures were pasted in the original books.

The reproduced books can then be used as readers. Where there are blank pages, each reader can be invited to make his own illustrations.

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## GREETING CARDS

### Activity Sequence

1. With the children's help, make a collection of used greeting cards of all types (traditional and contemporary).
2. Assemble a large variety of paper (construction, gift wrapping, contact, etc.) and writing and drawing implements.
3. Distribute the cards so that each child has one of each kind.
4. Discuss the purposes of the cards and read examples of the greetings. Make it clear that greetings are short and to the point.
5. Ask children to make greeting cards of their own.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Sort and display greeting cards in an attractive manner.

Allow children to send greeting cards to each other inside folded pieces of paper on which the recipients' names must be written by the senders.

B. Subsequent

Set up a card shop as an outlet for cards which children continue to produce. Cards should be priced and "bought" to give meaningful practice of the use of money.

See that children who have birthdays or who are sick are sent greeting cards through the mail by other children, giving them practice in writing names and addresses.

Cut some oaktag to the size of a standard postcard. Keep these on hand for children to turn into picture postcards.

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## "IF I WERE TEENY..."

**Activity Sequence**

1. Make a collection of miniatures (models of people, animals) and models of small living things (spiders, ladybugs, etc.), each of which can be enclosed completely by the clasped hands of the child.

2. Talk about the meaning of the word "teeny." Elicit synonyms from the children.

3. Let each child in a small group select a model which he can keep and handle during the ensuing discussion.

4. Talk with the children about what it would be like to be very small. Stimulate discussion by questions such as:

   "Where would you live?"
   "What could be your bed?"
   "What would things in this room look like?"
   "How would you feel?"
   "What things would you do that you can't do now?"

5. As the discussion proceeds, build up a chart of the words which the children frequently use, and of particularly exciting words. Number the words so that subsequently they can be referred to easily.

6. Provide some very small books (say 2" x 3") and some very large books. Tell the children that they can each write an illustrated book entitled, "If I were teeny...." Let each child choose a book of the size he prefers.

7. Display the word chart and let the writing begin. Help children with additional words, as necessary.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Tell the children that you want to make a chart of pictures of very small things. Ask children to collect appropriate pictures. Organize the chart as soon as possible, with the children's help.

B. Subsequent

Introduce the notion of being gigantic.

Invite interested children to make similar books entitled, "If I were a giant."

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## NONSENSE RHYMES AND STORIES

**Activity Sequence**

1. Select a book of rhymes and nonsense and read selections to a small group of children (for example, selections from Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*).

2. Talk about rhyming.

3. Select a word used by the children in their basal reading program (cat, look, man, etc.) and write it at the top of a large chart.

4. Show the chart to the children and invite them to make some words which rhyme with the printed word, helping them with letter substitutions as necessary. Write each word that the group accepts on the chart. List the words so that the root of each word is aligned. Leave adequate space so that each word can be illustrated. If children offer nonsense words, accept them, but make a separate

list of such words, leaving space, as before, so that illustrations may be added.

5. When a sufficient number of words have been listed, ask the children if they can use the words to make nonsense sentences, for example:

   "The cook shook the book with a glook."

   Write one or two of these sentences at the bottom of the chart.

6. Give each child a small book and invite him to write nonsense stories or rhyming sentences in it, leaving space for illustrations.

7. As each child completes his book, let him illustrate it.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Check that each child can read his book and then display it for others to read.

Display the word chart with other word sources.

B. Subsequent

Make a large class book to contain nonsense stories and rhymes. Invite children to make contributions.

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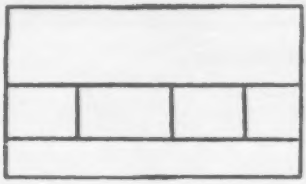
## COMIC STRIPS

**Activity Sequence**

1. Make a collection of comic strips from newspapers, with the children's help.

2. Cut into unit strips, block out the speech, and paste each

unit strip onto a larger piece of tag board as shown below:



3. Form a small group of children, and hand each child one of the prepared cards.

4. Talk about what the strips show. Ask the children what they think the characters are saying.

5. Select one strip and ask the children in the group to suggest words, phrases, or sentences which the characters might speak. Write these on paper cut into the form of speech "balloons," and affix them to the tag board with paste so that the "tail" of each balloon associates with the character who is speaking.

6. Give each child paper, scissors, paste, and a writing tool. Let him write and paste balloons lettered with the appropriate words, phrases, or sentences onto the board. Provide help as necessary.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Put together associated comic strips completed by the children in book form.

Provide a thematic source of words used in comic strips in the form of a wall chart. Illustrate each word.

B. Subsequent

Discuss words often used in comic strips, such as ZOOM and WHOOSH, and show how they are related to actual sounds. Let children invent similar words.

Provide dittoed frames with 3 or 4 sections and invite children to use them to make their own comic strips. These may be created around a cartoon character invented by the class, e.g. ALEXANDER THE ALLIGATOR.

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## SMALL BOOKS

### Activity Sequence

1. Make a large number of four-page books of varying shapes and sizes.

2. Make a collection of writing materials (pencils, Magic Markers, crayons, ball-point pens).

3. Introduce the books and the writing materials to the children making clear:

   a. Where they will be stored.
   b. When they will be available to the children.
   c. That any child may take one of the books and the writing/drawing materials to produce a personal book of writing, drawing, pasted pictures, etc. about a topic of his own choice, for example:

      A book of names and telephone numbers
      A book of jokes and riddles
      A book about myself
      Football stars

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Create a display area for the completed books so that children can see each other's work.

Arrange to spend time with each child who completes a book to discuss content and approach with the objective of diagnosing difficulties and interests and to suggest complementary or alternati· · means of expression.

B. Subsequent

Select one or more books which appear to be of fundamental importance to their authors and offer the children concerned the means of reproducing their work so that larger numbers of children may have copies to read, take home, or work w·h (add color to the pictures, change words, add their own statements, etc.).

The usual means of reproduction will be a ditto machine. The children themselves can produce the masters with some help from you.

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## PICTURE POSTCARDS

**Activity Sequence**

1. Make a collection of picture postcards from an art museum, showing only reproductions of abstract or fanciful work, e.g. paintings by Miro, Kandinsky or Ben Nicholson. Augment the collection by making "postcards" with cuttings from parts of advertisements and patterns from magazines, posters, etc.

2. Select one of the cards and ask one child in a group to talk about it. Encourage the child to go beyond literal

descriptions by asking questions such as, "How does the picture make you feel?" or, "Does the picture remind you of something else?"

3. Select one or two responses which the group likes and write them on a piece of oaktag.

4. Place the picture postcard and the oaktag on display.

5. Spread out the remaining cards and have each child select one.

6. Give each child a piece of oaktag and ask him to write about the picture he has selected, leaving space at the top to mount the picture postcard, using photo corners, and space at the bottom. Provide assistance with the writing, as necessary.

## Follow Up

A. Immediate

Display the work which the children have produced. Other children may respond to the picture postcards by writing in the space left free on the oaktag.

B. Subsequent

There may be artwork produced by children which could be a rich resource for writing of the kind outlined above. Abstract patterns, finger paintings, collages and some structures can stimulate emotive written responses. It must be stressed that the child who produces the artwork may feel little need to write about it, but he may enjoy other children's responses to his work in this different way. Suitable artwork can be mounted and bound into a book with interleaved blank pages on which "readers" may write their impressions of the pictures.

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## TV GUIDES

### Activity Sequence

1. Make a collection of TV Guides.

2. Give a TV Guide to each child in the group and discuss the range of contents:

   Informative entries—listings, times, channels.
   Opinions—program reviews, etc.
   Descriptive entries—stories about TV stars, how programs were made, etc.
   Advertising—previews of future programs, etc.

3. Talk with the group about making a TV Guide. Talk with each child about the contribution he would like to make.

4. Provide the children with writing and drawing implements and paper of a uniform size.

5. Allow the children time to produce their individual contributions to the joint TV Guide. Provide help with words and phrases as necessary.

6. Designate a storage area in which completed entries may be deposited.

7. When all the contributions are ready, assemble them into the guide with the children's help.

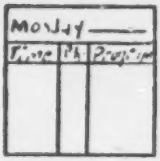
### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Cut out of commercial TV Guides the words which are in sufficiently large print, choosing only those words which are used frequently by the children when writing their own joint guide. Paste the words onto a large sheet of tag board, add a suitable heading, and store the sheet with other similar word sources for the children's future use.

B. Subsequent

Discuss the design of ditto masters which could define the format for the production of other TV Guides.



Children can then complete such dittoed sheets and assemble a TV Guide on a regular basis.

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## ADVERTISEMENTS

### Activity Sequence

1. With the children's help, collect old newspapers, magazines, and catalogues.
2. Discuss the contents of a magazine with the children, pointing out that certain pages show advertisements and others give information and opinions.
3. Focus on advertisements and discuss their nature.
4. Show that advertisements usually comprise an illustration plus writing.
5. Take one advertisement and cut out, or obliterate, the writing. Ask the children to suggest alternative "copy."
6. Give each child a newspaper, magazine, or catalogue and scissors and paper. Suggest that each child choose an advertisement, cut out the illustration only, and think of writing that should go with it.
7. Children paste or staple pictures onto paper and write the supporting copy, being helped as necessary.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Individual children's work may be assembled to produce an advertising leaflet or catalogue.

B. Subsequent

Abstract "advertising words" from the children's copy and produce a thematic chart to be used as a word source.

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## "WHEN I GROW UP..."

**Activity Sequence**

1. Prepare some sheets of paper of uniform size that would be suitable for binding into a book at a later time.

2. While the children watch, write the heading, "When I grow up..." on one of the sheets of paper.

3. Talk to the group about growing up and discuss with the children what might happen to them. Invite the children to make statements which begin with the words "When I grow up...." Initial responses may concern what each child aspires to become, e.g.,

   "When I grow up, I'll be a pop star."

   Encourage wider ranging responses by asking the group to consider leading questions such as:

   "What will you look like?"
   "Where will you be able to go?"
   "What will seem funny/strange to you then?"
   "What will things in the world look like then?"

4. Give each child a sheet of paper and ask him to write the idea that he likes best (selected from his own suggestions) at the top, or bottom, leaving room for subsequent

illustration. Allow the children to prepare more than one sheet. Provide help with writing, as necessary.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Allow the children to illustrate each of the statements they have made.

Combine the sheets into a group book. Bind in some blank pages so that other children can add to the book, if they so wish.

B. Subsequent

Encourage children to make similar, complete booklets of their own. Make the booklets available for others to read.

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## SCIENCE JOURNAL

**Activity Sequence**

1. Obtain a pot, a bag of potting soil or vermiculite, and a packet of seeds (choose something that germinates quickly and shows fairly rapid growth, such as four o'clock, zinnia, marigold).
2. Make up and mimeograph some "data sheets." For example:

| |
|---|
| Date _____ Name of Plant _____ |
| How many plants are there? _____ |
| How many buds are there? _____ |
| How many flowers are there? _____ |
| How tall is the tallest plant? _____ |
| Comment: |

3. Staple about a dozen data sheets into an oaktag cover.

4. With a small group of children, supervise the planting of the seeds.

5. Show the children the data book and explain to them that they can use the book to keep track of the growth of the seeds that they have just planted.

6. Ask them to suggest a title for the book. Write the title on the cover—or let one of the children write it.

7. Turn to the first data sheet and fill it out with the children. Point out that the Comment section will be used to draw pictures of the plant as it grows and to write about new things as they happen (such as buds and flowers). Collaborate with the children on writing a few lines about the planting you just did.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Either on a systematic basis (about once a week), or when something "new" happens with the plant, make an entry in the journal. Encourage the children to describe size, shape, color of flowers and leaves, etc., and to draw pictures to accompany the descriptions. Assist the children with the writing as necessary.

B. Subsequent

When the plants seem to have reached their peaks, go over the journal with the children to give them a sense of the overall development. Use the journal to discuss the order of the growth stages and the amount of time it took for each new thing to happen.

*Game*: if several different types of flowers were grown, one child could draw his favorite and the others could try to guess what it is. Have the people doing the guessing tell why they guessed as they did.

## MOOD MUSIC

### Activity Sequence

1. Play a track from a recording which evokes phantasy, such as:

   "Pictures at an Exhibition," Moussorgsky-Ravel
   "Scheherazade," Rimsky-Korsakov
   "La Boutique Fantasque," Rossini-Respighi

2. As the children listen quietly, ask them to write words which come into their minds. The words need not be connected in any way.

3. Help each child to spell his words correctly, and also help him to write others which he cannot write for himself.

4. Repeat the music while children add words to their lists.

5. Give further help with spelling, as before.

6. Provide each child with paper and crayons and ask him to draw a pattern or picture evoked by the music and his words. As this activity proceeds, play the music once again.

### Follow Up

A. Immediate

Work with the children and help them to use their words, and other words, to produce free verse. Using the words *dance, spin, warm, shadow, soft,* a child might be encouraged to write:

dance soft shadow
spin and spin
warm in the sun

B. Subsequent

Mount the children's drawings and associated writing on facing pages in a large book. Title the book according to the music and display it in the classroom.

Allow children, who exhibit interest, to repeat the procedure for themselves.

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## IN THE BAG

### Activity Sequence

1. Place a number of small objects which have surfaces of different textures in a deep, narrow bag. Suitable objects might be:

   a smooth stone
   an irregular piece of an eraser
   a cube of sponge rubber
   a glass marble
   a piece of sandpaper
   a small piece of wood with nails partly driven into it
   a small piece of driftwood
   a piece of metal

2. Pass the bag around a small group of children and ask them to feel the objects inside it without looking at them.

3. Talk to the children about their sensations as they touch the objects in the bag.

4. Ask each child to write words which come to mind as the bag is passed around again.

5. Help each child to spell his words correctly, and to write others which he could not write for himself.

6. Help the children to use their words, and other words, to

write evocative phrases and sentences about the objects in the bag. Stress the use of comparisons (similes and metaphors).

Hard as my father's hand
The smooth fingers of a tree

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Collect the children's writing and use it to make a chart on which the objects in the bag are also displayed. Invite other children to associate each phrase or sentence with one or more of the objects.

B. Subsequent

Allow interested children to make up another set of objects to put in a bag, and use this set with other children, as before.

---

## PARTS

**Activity Sequence**

1. Discuss with the children the various parts of the face. Make a word list as you point them out.

2. Pass out a hand mirror to each child. Ask them to study their faces for a moment. Then ask each child to decide which of his features he likes best.

3. Have the children look in their mirrors again, focusing on the feature they like best. Tell them to watch that feature as they change their expression: sad, happy, frightened, surprised.

4. Discuss with the children why they like their favorite feature and what they saw that feature do when they

changed expressions. Build word charts as generated by this discussion.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Give the children assorted drawing materials and ask them to draw a very large picture of their favorite feature. Tell the children to leave space on the feature to dictate or write something about it. When the writing is finished, have the children cut out their features. Help the children to construct a bulletin board assembly of faces made from the features they contribute.

B. Subsequent

This activity can be adapted for anything that is composed of "parts" that children can easily differentiate (e.g., bodies, bicycles, baseball teams, etc.). In addition, the activity has the potential for being a good way to introduce the notion of functional relationships.

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## TALL TALES

**Activity Sequence**

1. Read a tall tale to the children (Davy Crockett, Paul Bunyan, Mighty Mouse, etc.). Discuss the meaning of the word *exaggeration*, helping the children to point out the exaggerations in the story just read.

2. Tell the children that the story is a tall tale. Make sure they understand that the hero of a tall tale can do things that ordinary persons or animals cannot do.

3. Encourage the children to invent their own heros for tall tales. Help them name their characters and decide what their special capabilities are.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Make a catalogue of Tall Tale Heros. Have the children illustrate their hero. Help them to write on the illustration the name of their character, as well as any other information they might want to include. Make the catalogue of a loose-leaf type so that children can easily add pages for new characters as they invent them.

B. Subsequent

Encourage children to write or dictate stories about the adventures of their character. Some children might choose to make a bound collection of stories about a particular character. Others may want to produce their work in the form of read-alongs (described earlier).

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## YARN STORIES

**Activity Sequence**

1. Cut several strands of yarn to a uniform length (3-5 feet). Tie the strands together at one end. As you hold the tied end, pass each of the free ends to a different child.

2. Begin to tell a story. As you reach a place requiring a descriptive word or a strong noun or verb, tug one of the yarn strands. Encourage the child whose strand has been tugged to add a word to keep the story going. You may want to begin the activity with a familiar story and then follow with a new invented story.

3. Build a chart of the words the children supply.

**Follow Up**

A. Immediate

Encourage the children to illustrate a portion of the

story. Remind them that the word chart will help them if they wish to write a sentence or two about their picture.

B. Subsequent

Store the yarn strands in a place that is visible and accessible to the children. Encourage them to form small groups to make up stories for themselves, with one of them playing the teacher role. They may wish to tape record these sessions for later use in creating read-alongs.

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## ASSOCIATING WRITING WITH GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The twenty-four topics presented here will induce varied and extensive writing which most children will enjoy producing. Nevertheless, the approach is contrived, and children already may be engaged in activities which would even more readily stimulate them to write.

In any classroom where children are working at many different tasks and communicating about their work in a wide variety of media, teachers can take an oblique approach to the generation of writing. All classrooms for young children will engender some activities which can stimulate children to write, even though the main approach is more highly structured. Often, a structured activity can be associated with less formal work, to the advantage of the child.

Teachers will find the following kinds of activities often lead to writing:

Constructing (making and building things)
Mathematical and "scientific" investigations
Cooking
Setting up and maintaining shops (record shops, bookshops, shops for "selling" things made by children)

Games and sports
Special events

Many classroom activities offer opportunities for writing if the teacher chooses to use them.